

## **Indiana Department of Environmental Management**

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*(Text does not include verbatim comments)*

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Honored to be here.

Agenda - at first what jumped out at me was how technical most of the sessions were, not being a scientist, but only a lowly attorney by training, it looked like I would be in way over my own head at this conference. But the more closely I looked at the agenda, I realized how valuable the sessions are and how much I could gain if I only had three days to give over. Unfortunately, I do not, so I will have to rely on IDEM staff who are here to brief me later.

So let me delve into my comments so you can get back to the real meat-and-potatoes of this meeting. . .

Obviously water...clean, abundant water...is the life blood of our state. It is the reason people settled in Indiana in the first place. Water resources was what lead Indiana to become the leader in the manufacturing of steel in America and a major industrial state. But our abundance of water and the way we have handled it has also left us with some of our greatest environmental challenges.

Seven out of every ten Hoosiers now get their drinking water from community public water supplies. Today in Indiana we have more than 4,000 public water supply systems.

Eighty percent of those water suppliers get their water from ground water sources. The remaining twenty percent, which include most of Indiana's largest suppliers, get their water from surface water. These drinking water sources point up the reasons we have to be so concerned about the pollution of surface and ground water.

The U.S. EPA has established drinking water standards for seventy-seven contaminants. Any public water supplier that exceeds the standard, fails to properly treat its water, or does not conduct the required testing, is in violation of the drinking water regulations. Last year, 1998, ninety-three percent of the public water suppliers that serve residential and commercial customers all year round were in compliance with the rules and regulations. An even more encouraging statistic is that since 1994 the number of people who get their drinking water from suppliers that are in significant non-compliance dropped from 450,000 to just 12,000 last year.

Today we are also dealing with the aftermath of our history. Years ago people didn't always understand the long-term consequences of their actions. When settlers from other parts of the country first came to this land, there was more than five and one-half million acres of wetlands. Today, eighty-five percent of those wetlands are gone. What we once considered a nuisance and

spent millions to drain, fill in, and destroy, we today understand was a natural habitat for wildlife that made ours a better state. That's why today state and federal laws require approval before filling in a wetland and often requires additional wetlands be constructed to replace the acres that are lost. And it is also why there are great efforts being made to restore wetlands in many parts of this state.

While ground water and wetlands are important to us, it is surface water that people most think of when they think of water pollution. Indiana has 36,000 miles of streams and more than 600 publicly owned lakes and reservoirs which cover more than 106,000 acres. Indiana also has 46 miles of coastline of Lake Michigan.

Of those millions of gallons of water, IDEM lists 208 streams and lakes in Indiana as impaired. These are the ones that will take our best efforts and energy to bring up to a standard of which we can all be proud.

As a part of those efforts, this year we have issued two landmark second draft notices of new rules. Those are the new surface water quality standards and the first-ever ground water quality standards. In those efforts we have incorporated the best scientific practices we can...including the science used to achieve the Great Lakes Initiative. Matt Rueff, our Assistant Commissioner for water, is here today and will discuss in greater detail the triennial review...our periodic look at Indiana water quality standards.

Also during the recent past at IDEM we have been able to put our money where our mouth is. We have continued to award grants under section "319" to actually make programs work at the local level. During fiscal year 1999, we awarded thirty-two "319" grants in the total amount of over four million dollars. Since the inception of the "319" program in the late 1980's, IDEM has disseminated eight million dollars for the development of approximately 180 projects.

We have also been very successful in expanding our state revolving loan program. We have streamlined the process for our wastewater loans to allow more communities to get more money more easily. In fiscal year 1999, alone we granted twenty-eight loans for a total amount of \$161,469,000. Prior to 1999, we had never awarded more than twelve loans in any one year, or more than sixty-three million dollars in a year. This fiscal year, we have already awarded nine loans for over twenty million dollars, and we are still going strong!

We have also expanded the program to include funds for drinking water improvements. We have saved local communities, and their ratepayers, millions of dollars that their improvements would have otherwise cost.

Also important to us at IDEM is our mercury awareness program. As I am sure you all know the dangers of mercury to children include serious damage to sight, hearing and motor skills. IDEM, the State Department of Health, and DNR have worked together for years to provide information to those who eat fish caught in Indiana's rivers, streams, and lakes, about the dangers of mercury in our fish. Our efforts have been recognized nationally, especially those efforts targeted at pregnant women and children.

I would like to take some time to tell you about IDEM's Agency Priorities, which will be our road map for the next two years (down to one and 1-half years): **1) Reducing Exposure to Toxics, 2) Partnering for Liveable Environments, 3) Communicating Environmental Information, and 4) Building a Better IDEM.**

**Reducing Exposure to Toxics** In many ways this might be our most important goal. Let me highlight some of the specific projects we will be focusing on in this area.

We will expand our focus on children: where they spend their days and where they live. We will develop an integrated pest management pilot program. We will work with child care facilities and schools to introduce them to integrated pest management practices. We will work with the state chemist to hold workshops throughout the state.

We will work to increase the number of facilities that participate in the 5-Star Child Care Facility program. We will also develop an expanded outreach program for all child care facilities and work to help educate parents about environmental safety for their children.

We will also begin a program to deal with the problem of asthma in children. We will determine those areas in the state where asthma rates are abnormally high. We will then work with government and private agencies to develop strategies for schools to use in the targeted areas.

We will also begin programs to target styrene and methylene chloride. We will build on our lead and mercury programs, and we will work to expand the Governor's Toxic Reduction Challenge.

These are just a few of the new or expanded efforts we will be making to reduce Hoosier exposure to toxics.

**Partnering For Liveable Environments** We will be working hard to improve accessibility and empower local communities in environmental matters. Our various program areas will increase their efforts to deal with specific issues and environmental problems in communities.

We will work hard to develop ways to assist communities in environmental planning. Too often we in Indiana face problems that are the result of shortsightedness or poor planning. Too many communities don't have the tools and resources they need to include environmental issues in their growth plans. For example, wastewater issues have not always held the same importance as planning for streets and lights.

IDEM will begin to work with local communities to assist them to make reasoned, careful choices about their environment and their future...a choice that allows them to weigh environmental concerns against issues of growth and economic development.

We plan to improve and expand our approach to environmental challenges through the watershed approach. You all know that environmental problems do not respect political boundaries. A plume of contaminants in a river doesn't recognize a county line or a town boundary. Environmental mitigation and protection requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach. One that recognizes and works with a variety of programs and agencies.

The watershed approach establishes a firm framework for coordinating and integrating a multitude of programs and resources. This type of approach directs the focus on water quality in a geographic area delineated by a watershed. This approach also reflects the realization that in order for all of the waters of the state to achieve the goal of designated uses for recreation, aquatic life support, and drinking water supply, we must implement an integrated approach which includes a common information base and especially an agreement on the roles, priorities and responsibilities for managing a watershed.

Therefore, this year we will begin by working to develop the key elements of a framework for blending our office of Water Management's programs into a comprehensive watershed management approach. Further, we will continue to implement the watershed approach that will best address water quality issues and facilitate local community involvement.

It is our goal to work through the issues within our agency, meet with and work hard with all of our partners around the state, and establish a plan to implement the watershed approach, and have it in place by mid-2001. We realize it is an ambitious goal but we believe it is important if we really plan to make Indiana a cleaner, healthier place to live.

**Communicating Environmental Information** We plan to make information more accessible within our agency and to those of you on the outside. Sometimes someone in the agency will have developed great information and put it in a very usable form. However, someone two floors away doesn't know about it even though it could be very useful. And usually, if someone two floors away doesn't know about it, someone at the other end of the state is even more in the dark about it.

We plan to attack these weaknesses and make the environmental information more accessible. We will work to integrate various databases and make them known and easy to get to. In the very near future we will be going on line with an interactive permit guide which will make a tremendous amount of information about permitting easily accessible.

We are beginning an effort to improve and consolidate our file rooms and the information they contain. Today the file room information is too hard for folks to access. We will be locating the files for our Offices of Air, Water and Land, in one location - on the twelfth floor of the Government Center. We will also be exploring ways to make our files accessible electronically. We also plan to put as much information as we can in regional file rooms as well.

**Building a Better IDEM** We plan to work better and smarter as an agency. We plan to improve our work environment, in part, by doing more to make you, and other Hoosiers, more aware of what we are doing. We also plan to walk the walk as well as talk the talk. IDEM will be a leader in Governor O'Bannon's "Greening the Government" initiative. We will increase our purchase and use of more recycled materials. We are already working hard at source reduction for paper...and believe me...reducing the amount of paper in a bureaucracy as large as ours is no easy feat...but we will do it. Another effort under this priority is the formation of an internal team to look at achieving more consistency in the area of compliance and enforcement across the agency. We also plan to enhance and improve our use of the regional offices in Northwest Indiana, Southwest Indiana, and Northern Indiana.

These are the four priorities we have set for ourselves as an agency. I have only highlighted a few of the specifics of the initiatives for you today.

Finally today let me share with you some of the specific things we plan to accomplish in the next two years or so in the Office of Water Management. We plan to reach final adoption of Ground Water Quality Standards by March of next year. We hope to complete the final adoption of the Revised Surface Water Quality Standards by the middle of next year. Preliminary adoption of our Wetlands Water Quality Standards and preliminary adoption of the Wastewater Line Construction Permit by Rule are also both slated for mid-2000.

As you know we have made significant progress in eliminating the NPDES permit backlog at IDEM. But while we have whittled the backlog to a mere shadow of its former self, we anticipate that about one hundred-thirty minor NPDES permits will expire between now and mid-2000. So we will be working to continue eliminating the old backlog while we work to prevent another backlog from starting.

Then there are other issues we are working on...like TMDLs. This is still a relatively new acronym for some people, so let me dispel the notion that it stands for "Too Much Darn Litigation" or "Too Many Darn Lawyers". At least it doesn't stand for either of those two things in Indiana as of yet! Instead, it is the acronym for Total Maximum Daily Load, and it is something we are moving ahead on. We are within weeks of completing the first TMDL study, which was conducted on Wildcat Creek. We have initiated, along with the Corps of Engineers, a TMDL model for the Grand Calumet River and the draft model should be completed during the year 2000. We are in the process of refining our TMDL model, and once that is done, we will next do TMDLs on:

- Kokomo Creek
- Little Wildcat Creek/Kelly West Ditch
- South Fork of the Wildcat Creek
- Fall Creek
- Pleasant Run

The Wellhead Protection program is moving along in our drinking water branch and is an important effort being made by IDEM. Beginning this year, public water supply systems are required to provide a regular yearly notice to their customers that reports on the previous year's activity. This is certainly a major jump ahead for the community's right to know, and the ability of citizens to make informed decisions about their health, and the water they drink and give to their children.

This has been just a quick peek at IDEM's future. We can't necessarily predict what the future will bring, but one thing of which I can be certain: Matt Rueff, who follows me here in a few minutes, will be one of the busiest and hardest working people in state government. I would like to take a moment to say a few words about Matt...and his hard working staff. They have a difficult job...just imagine telling nearly one hundred-six Hoosier mayors to begin making plans to eliminate their combined sewer overflow discharges. That task alone would keep a lot of people at home. But Matt is there every day...working hard...overseeing one of the largest

departments in IDEM....and all in the glare of the public spotlight. So let me take this opportunity today to say "thank you, Matt" for all the hard work you've done. And extend my thanks to your staff.

So even though we, not even Matt, knows what will happen, I do know what we want to happen. We want to continue to do more...be more effective ... accomplish more...reach out to make more friends and partners. We have learned at IDEM we can't do much by ourselves. We need you and lots of other groups and individuals. Together we can make a difference.

We have a solid past on which to build. We have a promising future to meet with enthusiasm and excitement. I cannot promise we will achieve all of our goals...fulfill all of our dreams. What I can promise you today is that we will try...we will work very hard to accomplish these tasks and truly make a difference.